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Joseph S. Myers

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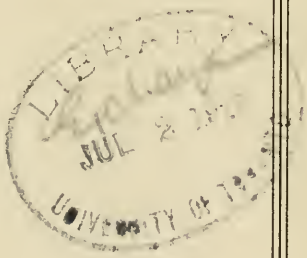

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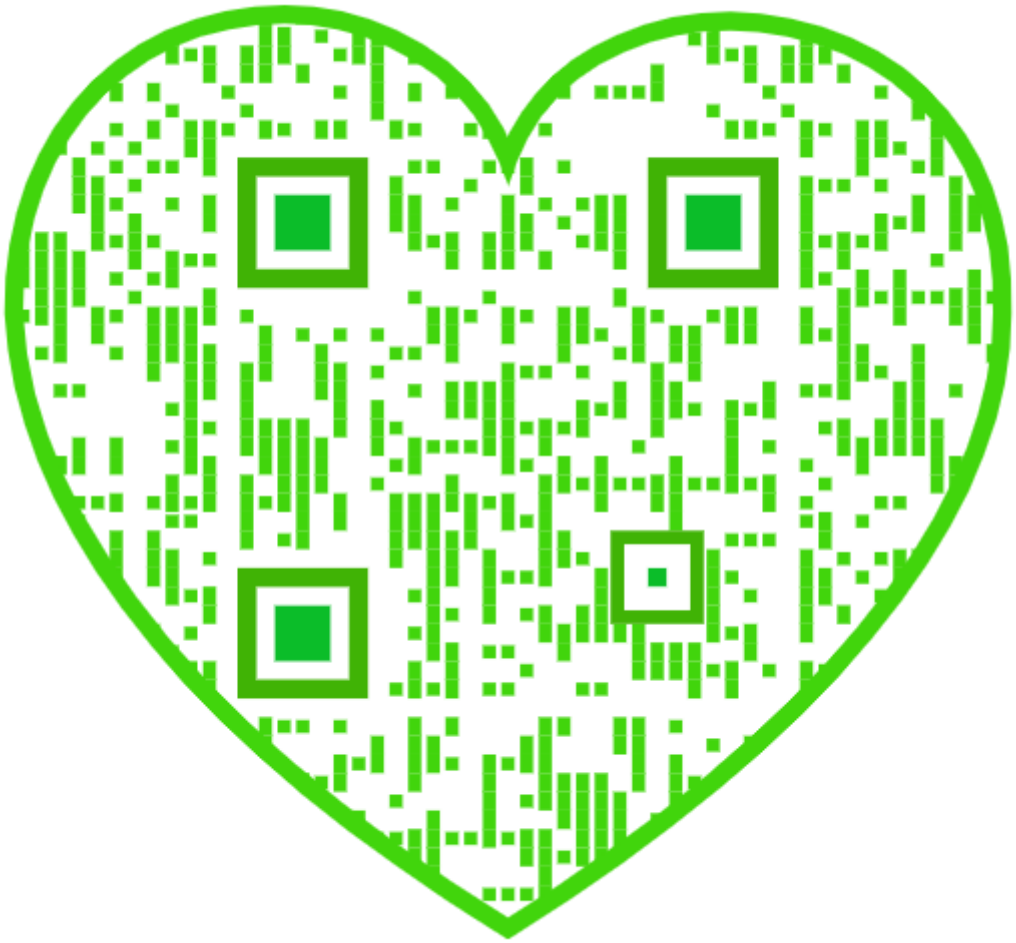

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JOSEPH S. MYERS

When a biographer, even an amateur, sets out, he is almost sure to have a prejudice, or at least a case to prove.

I may as well confess to a prior feeling that Horace Greeley was an overestimated man, that he was wrong oftener than he was right, that he did more harm than good in his thirty years of public life.

As I studied his life more deeply, I began to waver, to understand that a mere fanatic, a pursuer of all the isms of his time, could not have had the influence of Horace Greeley, could not have held sway over the minds and hearts of hundreds of thousands through the terrible years of the Civil War and the critical decade or more preceding secession. It became apparent that Horace Greeley was something more, much more, than an opinionated editor with a vitriolic pen and a vituperative tongue.

For our purposes in this paper let us classify Greeley as a genius who is not to be judged by the standards applicable to plain, everyday, run-of-mine men.

Definitions are enlightening, if they are not taken slavishly; so let us consult the dictionary. Genius, "a person of general or special intellectual qualities developed to a phenomenal degree." Shakespeare, then, was a genius, and Napoleon, and Lincoln.

When a man without ancestral background, without education in the accepted sense, without a bit of so-called culture, a man of violent prejudices, of daily inconsistencies, generally on the wrong side first or last, when such a man literally forces himself into the historical picture, must we not concede genius to him?

The next thing we must posit is equally obvious: Greeley must not be judged by the opinion of the day in which he lived, any more than would be Shakespeare or Milton, Cromwell or Washington, or Napoleon. To their contemporaries none of these men was great. And then again, paradoxically, they *must* be judged by their period in history, by the morals, ethics, and manners of their generation.

In other words we must discount the contemporary critics, whether friendly or inimical, and at the same time we must study leaders in the light of history.

In Greeley's case it would be worse than folly to ask whether he would be a great editor today, just as foolish as to ask what kind of a twentieth-century soldier Julius Caesar would be, or what kind of a mariner Christopher Columbus would be on the bridge of the Leviathan. We must keep in mind what Horace Greeley did in the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century, not what he might have done earlier or later.

These thoughts may help unravel the more or less tangled thread of Greeley's life and genius.

* * * *

Greeley was considerably over average height, of a rather ill-knit frame, with a good-sized round head. Fine hair, decidedly blond, covered the dome and extended around the sides of his face and under his chin. His near-sighted eyes early made necessary heavy-lensed spectacles, sitting on his short nose and looped around his ears. His Pickwickian face and figure were enough to attract attention to him, but they were accentuated by the manner of his dress, which made him fine sport for the caricaturist. When not togged out for formal occasions, he wore ill-fitting garments, in summer time always of white linen, with the invariable linen duster topped by a high, white beaver hat. In his day men wore boots which with some difficulty trousers were made to conceal. Greeley was never a patient man and often one trouser leg would catch in his boot strap and stay there all day. His string necktie lodged its bow under one ear or the other, we are told, but he was always scrupulously clean, with a fresh linen suit a day. Rain or shine he went about armed with the fat umbrella of the period.

And when we say "went about," we mean just that, for he was well known on the streets, in political and other public meetings, and in various conferences, and at church. And not in New York only, but all over the country, for he was much in demand as a lecturer after he became famous. He had an absent-minded, abstracted air, but he always knew what he was about. Melville E. Stone, the long time head of the Associated Press, recalls as a boy seeing

Greeley in his father's church in Illinois in 1858, the year of the Lincoln-Douglas campaign. In his autobiography Mr. Stone said:

> A curious old gentleman [he was only forty-seven] appeared and was seated by my side. A few moments after the opening of the service and when the sermon was in progress, he dropped his head and apparently went to sleep. I thought him most irreverent. When he went home with us for luncheon, I learned that he was Horace Greeley. He had heard every word of the sermon and discussed it with my father during the lunch hour. The next night he lectured in the church. This lecture tour was one of the many occasions on which this strange, untrustworthy man was doing violence to the hopes of the sound-hearted people of the North. He was urging the election of Douglas against Lincoln for the United States Senate.

Further Mr. Stone characterized Greeley as a shifty person, vituperative in the last degree, and a persistent office beggar. This lecture tour was in 1858. It was at this time that Lincoln made his famous speech in which he said that a house divided against itself cannot stand.

Now for dates and other data which will be given meagerly. Horace Greeley was born in New Hampshire in 1811 of Scotch-Irish descent. He was the third of seven children. The Greeleys had come to the new country as early as 1650, and their descendants were scattered over New England. The family names bear witness to their dependence on the Bible. We can easily go back as far as the great-great grandfather of Horace, one Benjamin Greeley of Massachusetts. He had a son Ezekiel, who was called a "cross old dog," a "hard knot," "as cunning as Lucifer." "His religion was nominally Baptist, but really go get money." Now Ezekiel had a son, also biblically named, Zaccheus, who inherited a gentle strain through his mother.

All the forebears of Horace were moderately well-to-do farmers. The father of Horace labored under the Biblical name, Zaccheus. Greeley's mother was named Woodburn, and somewhere Horace bears testimony to the fact that whatever impulse he had toward acquirement and exertion came through his mother's family.

Horace's parents worked a typical New Hampshire farm near Amherst. He was the third child and, as might have been expected, he was a precocious one, who could read at the age of three and be-

gan his school education at that time. Early he showed himself a champion speller and willing declaimer, and as an infant prodigy read the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Arabian Nights* and such similar literature as was likely to be found in the little New England farm home.

His ability brought him to the notice of a well-to-do townsman who offered later to send him to Phillips Exeter Academy and to college, but as proud Father Zaccheus did not like the idea of charity, Horace was deprived of his chance. Later the father, heavily in debt, lost his farm and fled to Vermont, leaving his family behind. Afterward he sent for them to make a home in a little cabin near Lake Champlain, where Horace did his share of the farm chores and went to school until he was thirteen years old, after which the teacher could instruct him no more. Horace was known in the neighborhood as an odd child, who found his pleasure in reading rather in the play of the other children.

Naturally he did not crave the farm, and as early as his eleventh year thought he would like the printing office. When he was fifteen he answered an advertisement for an apprentice in the *Northern Spectator* at East Poultney, a dozen miles away, where he was given $40 a year in addition to his board, and indentured for five years.

Zaccheus Greeley, a man of some self education, and more pride than was good for him, failing again in Vermont, moved to the forests of northwestern Pennsylvania not far from Erie. The fifteen-year-old Horace, remaining behind, watched his family set out by road and canal for the wilds of Penn's Woods. He made one or two trips to his parents during the apprenticeship, which he was not destined to serve out, as the newspaper at Poultney expired in 1830, sending a youthful printer to join his folks, four hundred miles distant, traveling by foot, but occasionally "thumbing" his way to lifts on wagons and canal boats. For a while he helped his father on the farm, but his distaste for such work soon sent him to Jamestown, just over the New York line, and to other towns, for small employment in printing offices. The newspaper urge next took him to Erie, where he found employment in the *Erie Gazette* at $15 a month and "keep" with his employer. After seven months, with apprenticeship still incomplete, he felt the call to a larger field, and with $25

in his pocket, and little impedimenta, he set out for New York, walking to Buffalo, and thence to his future home by boat and wagon.

Facts of Greeley's early life are easily gleaned from *The Life of Horace Greeley* by James Parton, who was to the editor what Boswell was to Johnson, or even better, what Weems was to George Washington. *Recollections of a Busy Life*, Greeley's autobiography, is not satisfactory to one who would know the real Greeley. However, in his book he thus describes himself on his arrival in the metropolis August 17, 1831:

> I was twenty years old the preceding February, tall, slender, pale, and plain; with ten dollars in my pocket, summer clothing worth as much more, and a decent knowledge of so much of the art of printing as a boy will usually learn in the office of a country newspaper. But I knew no human being within a hundred miles, and my unmistakably rustic manner and address did not favor that immediate command of remunerative employment which was my most urgent need. However, the world was before me. My personal estate tied up in a pocket handkerchief did not at all encumber me.

In this city of not much more than 200,000 inhabitants he found no welcome. From his boarding house he sallied forth for work, but found none for a month. Then, in an office on Chatham Street the foreman gave him employment setting type on an edition of the Bible, which with its fine type and finer footnotes was about as mean a job of typography as could be imagined, piece work which netted the young compositor a dollar a day. Other work came to him for a year or more, until he and another printer with a capital of $200 set up their own office, their chief contract being the printing of the *Bank Note Reporter* which in spite of its dignified name was not much else than an organ of the lottery, then a prospering and more or less legitimate business.

This is a good place to stop for an inquiry as to what there was in Greeley's environment, heredity, or experience to open the way to future distinction. Practically nothing. Neither of the parents bequeathed to Horace any traits of greatness, nor did his brothers and sisters exhibit any. They were all good enough people, but without notable qualities, without energy and vigor, and without thrift.

There was little schooling, but, as we have seen, Horace showed three-year-old precocity. His retentive memory, his fondness for reading, the varied knowledge that came to him as a printer's devil, his keenness of observation, his hard knocks, all these were character-forming, but probably no more so than with hundreds and thousands of other young men of his time and later. It is easy to say that during these years he was laying a foundation, building character or storing up education which would serve him later; but, really, try as hard as we may, we cannot find anything in this anaemic, awkward, slovenly lad, scarcely more than a minor, from which to prophesy greatness. As yet there is no trace of pertinacity of purpose beyond that of any youth who must work or starve. His industry and sagacity were not above the average, his social qualities nil, his personality minus. No sign yet of the stubbornness of opinion, strangely fused with a baffling vacillation, no portent of his tendency to seek after strange gods in social, economic, political, or religious affairs. No appearance yet of the more than usual sincerity and honesty that was to mark his career, and possibly account for the tremendous influence that was to be his later. Nothing yet on which to forecast his ability to write movingly and convincingly.

Before this digression we had covered what may be called the first epoch in Greeley's life, bringing us down to his plunge, modest as it was, into business for himself. Not much capital was required for a printing business in those days. Besides the lottery publication other work was found, including printing for another man a new weekly newspaper which lasted only three weeks. But the lottery paper brought money to the firm and, with prosperity showing itself, Horace treated himself to a visit to his parents far off in northwestern Pennsylvania. His sister Esther said later that she "was much impressed with a marked change in her brother's tastes and character—a change indicated as much by his reading as by his external appearance. He seemed to me the embodiment of romance and poesy."

Horace was getting on! He must have had a going mechanical plant, for within two or three years James Gordon Bennett, no fool, invited Greeley and his partner to help in putting out the *New York Herald*. The invitation was declined, possibly because Greeley already was nursing his own ambition of an editorship, an

ambition that came to fruition on March 24, 1834, in the *New Yorker*. This weekly rapidly gained favor, reaching in time a subscription list of 7,500. One of the elements of its popularity was a page of music "mainly of the tum-tum variety and of sentimental songs such as the prim misses of the day might be expected to appreciate," as one writer tells it. The *New Yorker* was described as "literary," but the editor showed his bent by his political contributions. Most of the contents were taken from other publications, but he had sufficient original and contributed matter to give it character. He early took on as assistant Henry J. Raymond, who two decades later was to be his bitter journalistic rival as the editor of the *New York Times*. Things were looking up so that in 1836 Horace completed the romance begun in his boarding house, by journeying to North Carolina to wed Mary Cheney, a school teacher who had gone South to pursue her vocation.

The "poesy and romanticism" noted by sister Esther showed themselves occasionally in the *New Yorker*, when the young editor dropped into verse, although he manfully admitted that he was no poet, if such a disclaimer were necessary. The paper was deluged with poetical contributions, and the reason for each declination was published as for instance: "The poet who stole 'Sir Cupid' from an old magazine and imposed it on us as an original production, is informed that we hope to be favored with no more of his efforts in the pilfering line."

The *New Yorker* looked more prosperous than it really was. The editor would take his readers into his confidence, telling how much he was running behind, and chiding delinquent subscribers, of whom he said in 1837, 2,500 had been stricken from the list. One of the significant things about the paper was the editor's disposition to urge reforms, so characteristic of the later Greeley. At one time he advised: "Keep out of New York and all great cities. There is abundance of land yet untilled which will produce potatoes with proper culture; there is no general insurance from starvation in the cities." Advice he had not taken to himself a few years earlier when he left the paternal roof. He urged better and lower priced transportation facilities and inveighed against combinations for price fixing of commodities. He proclaimed the need of political education; he even came out in defense of his old lottery friends who had been

accused of unfairness in the drawings. One of the Greeley family contemporaries is quoted as saying all its members were peculiar and that their chief characteristic was tenacity of opinion. At this stage perhaps Horace could lay claim to the first of these, peculiarity, and something of tenacity was beginning to show itself.

Greeley was a newspaper editor, but not an outstanding one during the days preceding the war with Mexico. The sturdy Texans won their freedom by their own strong arms, and the United States Government was somewhat embarrassed when one of its generals took his troops into the new Republic. Greeley, with many others, protested vigorously, but the excitement quieted down when President Jackson ordered General Gaines back. This may be regarded as the earliest of Greeley's amateur efforts in military strategy, but by no means his last. Early pacifistic tendencies cropped out in 1840 over boundary disputes with Canada, when the *New Yorker* said the controversy must be settled by compromise or result in a war. "Who," the editor asked, "can soberly prefer the bloody alternative?" a forerunner of his compromise policy at the beginning of secession twenty years later.

He ridiculed the idea of the extension of further rights to women and denied the doctrine of "equality of the sexes" in political privileges and social conditions. "We insist," he continued, "that a tacit compact has ever prevailed and still exists, by which the sphere of action of either sex is marked out and defined." It was not many years before he manifested one of his weaknesses, or virtues, that of agility in changing sides, for he became an ardent advocate of women's rights. Greeley had been married three years when he talked so firmly of woman's place.

Another preachment was his criticism of propaganda, although he called it the "Tyranny of Opinion." "The machinery of moral improvement," he said, "is clicking around us at every turn; the manifestation of opinion is conducted by associations at every corner, and a man, instead of doing his own thinking, may have it furnished to order by companies of one kind or another in every direction."

Perhaps we have been thinking that the organizing of public opinion was something new under the sun. And note, too, that Horace was doing much and would do more to make people's opinions coincide with his. More citations might be made from the *New*

Yorker to show the development of the fledgling editor. He was outspoken against the Mormon outrages in Missouri, and against Biddle and the United States Bank. Hear this on Drink: "We hold that no man has a moral, and none should have legal, right to sell that debasing and maddening poison, alcohol, to his neighbors." During his editorship of the *New Yorker* he had been offered a nomination to the New York Assembly on the Whig ticket, and he would have been elected, as the sequel showed, but he was wise enough to decline, showing more forbearance than he did later when he became a chronic office seeker.

Important days were coming. Early in 1838 Thurlow Weed, political leader and editor of the *Albany Journal*, loomed on Greeley's horizon. This personage for many years had a marked influence in the development of Greeley. Weed's journalistic and political eyes beheld Greeley, or at least beheld the *New Yorker*, for he did not know its guiding spirit. After their first meeting in 1838 he thus describes his future political partner: "I repaired to the office in Ann Street where the *New Yorker* was published and inquired for its editor. A young man with light hair and blond complexion, with sleeves rolled up, standing at the case, stick in hand, replied that he was the editor, and this youth was Horace Greeley."

He outlined to Greeley his plan to publish a Whig campaign weekly to support William H. Seward, a rising lawyer of Auburn, for governor. It was arranged that Greeley was to edit in Albany a newspaper, to be called the *Jeffersonian*, surely a strange name for a Weed-Greeley-Seward organ. This would necessitate Greeley's spending part of each week in the capital. A salary of $1000 was fixed for the campaign, a very considerable sum to the editor of the *New Yorker*, who had been scarcely able to make his financial ends meet. The first number appeared in March, continued to grow in influence, and was credited with doing much to elect Seward. Greeley met Seward, ten years his senior, in Albany, finding him, "a slender, light-haired young man, stooping and near-sighted, rather unmindful of social usages [Think of that comment by Greeley!] yet singularly clear, original, and decided in his political views and theories."

Greeley's craft was fairly launched on the political sea, but there is nothing in biographies to prove that he had any vision of what was

coming, or that he saw himself a moving force. True, he was linked to Weed and Seward, the two Whig powers in New York, but only as a hired man, not admitted to the partnership. He had a newspaper that barely made him a living, did a few odd jobs of anonymous writing, and probably worried about the future as many another young man has done. He had opinions, and the courage to express them, but so far they had got him nothing much more than to bring him to Weed's attention. But that was enough.

Greeley, at the Whig national convention of 1839, held in a Lutheran church in Harrisburg, favored Henry Clay, but Harrison won easily. After this first taste of political reporting, Greeley went to Albany to cover the legislature for his paper, quite a bit of enterprise for the literary *New Yorker*. In the spring of '40 the Democrats nominated Van Buren, and the contest that followed was more of a circus than a political campaign, as one writer puts it. As the ancient General Harrison came from a log cabin, and was fond of hard cider, these facts became campaign symbols. The success of the *Jeffersonian* in the Seward campaign pointed the way to a Harrison organ, and just as clearly was Greeley cast as editor and printer of the *Log Cabin*. The paper reached a circulation of 80,000 and would have gone higher had press facilities permitted.

If Greeley had launched a boat on the sea of politics a year or two before, he now had a small fleet. Besides managing his two papers, he was taken partially into the Weed-Seward councils, served on campaign committees, and made stump speeches. A historian says: "He became the vital center of the campaign in state and nation. Never did so young a man, only twenty-nine, make so prodigious a stir with his pen. . . . He departed from the conservative reasoning of the *Jeffersonian* and turned on the loud speaker." He followed his *New Yorker* plan of printing music, campaign songs, "which," he wrote to Weed, "are doing more good than anything else. . . . Really, I think every song is good for five hundred new subscribers." Harrison received 234 electoral votes to Van Buren's 50, and Governor Seward was carried on to re-election.

After the Harrison campaign came a marked change in Greeley, the budding of an ambition to be more than a hired man for Seward and Weed. Admittedly Greeley had done much for the Whig party, but he had been given little voice in its councils. So a short

time preceding the election he wrote to Seward asking for "an earnest talk" after election. He admitted to Seward that he had not met any encouragement in his overtures to Weed, although he thought Weed liked him, and then ensues this touch of grim humor, "I don't think he ever had a dog about the house he likes better, but he thinks I know nothing about politics." He followed with a mild threat in wanting to know about the plans for the future, and if there were none, he would try to form some for himself—a threat put into effect many times in the next quarter century. The thirty-year-old editor made the boss-ship a triumvirate, as before long the partnership of Weed, Seward, and Greeley was formed to last for fifteen years, a partnership often shaken by differences of opinion, but always powerful.

Greeley's ambition manifested itself in another direction, probably an offshoot of his desire for political power. He knew that whatever influence he had acquired was due to the papers he had edited, the *New Yorker*, the *Jeffersonian* and the *Log Cabin*, the last-named being continued after the election. But he was not making money, nor was he likely to. His next step showed courage, or foolhardiness, as you please, for he resolved on the publication of a daily in a city already gutted with newspapers of varied types. There were personal and political organs, some high in subscription price and some more popular, like Bennett's *Herald* and Beach's *Sun*. Greeley, already in debt, found an "angel" who loaned him $1000; and on April 10, 1841, the *Tribune* appeared, characterized in the prospectus as "a morning Journal of Politics, Literature and General Intelligence." The announcement took a shot at "the immoral and degrading police reports, advertisements, and other matter which have been allowed to disgrace the columns of our leading Penny Papers." Later the editor said "his chief idea was a journal removed alike from servile partisanship on the one hand and gagged, mincing neutrality on the other."

When it is remembered that in 1842 in New York there were well on to thirty daily and weekly papers, Greeley's venture looks more like foolhardiness than courage. Nor can we be quite sure as to Greeley's motive; that is, whether he was actuated by a patriotic and unselfish desire to improve the times and morals, whether it was to promote the political ends of the Whig "Big Three," or whether

it was a desire to build up his falling financial fortunes; perhaps a combination of the three motives. Anyhow his venture was a winner, due to its editorial vigor and to the attention given to the gathering and presentation of news. But money was scarce, and the new daily required it, even with Greeley doing most of the editorial work, much of the typesetting and making-up, and trying to oversee the business end. He found the partner he needed in Thomas McElrath, whom he knew as a small publisher when he first came to New York. On the last day of July of the year of the founding of the *Tribune* the partnership was announced. McElrath had everything Greeley lacked, was something of a go-getter, as we say today. By September the subscription list reached 10,000, and in another few months was doubled. The prospects were so rosy that the *New Yorker* and the *Log Cabin* were combined into what was called the *Weekly Tribune*, which in the course of a few years became the best-known, most successful and most powerful publication in the United States—next to the family Bible in the minds of hundreds of thousands of people of a score of states.

This is not the place to detail the rivalries of the New York press, except to say that the *Sun* and the *Herald*, cheap papers, were hard pressed, until finally the competition narrowed to Greeley and Bennett. There could be little doubt as to the *Tribune's* superiority on the editorial page, but in news getting two great newspaper men crossed equal swords.

The Whig elation over the election of Harrison was short-lived, for the old Hard Ciderist passed out about a week before the birth of the *Tribune*, and with the succession of Vice-President Tyler, the party schism began. Within six months Tyler had vetoed a Whig bill to restore the United States Bank smashed by Jackson, and his cabinet, with the exception of Secretary of State Webster, resigned. Henry Clay, next to Webster the leading Whig of the country, resigned his seat in the Senate out of pure disgust and a sense of futility. And slavery was another wolf at the door in the agitation for the annexation of the Republic of Texas to expand slave territory, accomplished in 1844. The distress of the firm of Weed, Seward, and Greeley can well be imagined, especially after the defeat of Clay by Polk in 1844. Greeley's admiration for Clay began when he attended the Whig convention in Harrisburg, and

the Kentuckian's defeat, following Greeley's strenuous work in the campaign of 1844, was a heavy physical and mental blow to Greeley. In his autobiography he tells at some length of his near breakdown, ending in an attack of boils, fifty or sixty at a time.

With the growing prominence of Greeley and his *Tribune*, it is worth while to refer to his qualities as prophet. In a letter of 1847 he predicted a lowering of tariff duties, although most of his life he was looked upon as a high protectionist. He believed that land and labor reforms would be the big issue for the next two decades. Also he hoped for the abolition of the army and navy. And, mark you, not a word about the issue of slavery, *the* issue of the next fifteen years. He might have done better picking lottery numbers or race horses than in political forecasting. Much as Greeley liked controversy, and fond as he was of criticizing, he frequently cautioned the young men of the *Tribune*. He rebuked among other things, attacks, mild enough, on the Catholic Church and on Jews, urging generosity to all creeds and races.

It is not easy to separate the *Tribune* from Greeley. The paper, as we know, was a success from the first. As one writer says: "It seemed to fill a void in the tastes of a class of readers who were inclined to well-written, original articles and literary matter selected with great taste and care, while the current news of the day was sufficiently covered to meet the wants of the general readers of the paper." One piece of enterprise in the early days was the sending of Charles A. Dana, then Greeley's chief assistant, to report the French Revolution of 1848 that dethroned Louis Philippe. Greeley himself used to go to Washington to report the proceedings of Congress. Moreover, he attracted to the *Tribune* a more distinguished group of writers than any other newspaper ever had, including Dana, Whitelaw Reid, Bayard Taylor, William Winter, John Hay, Henry J. Raymond, and Margaret Fuller, but with all this array of talent, and in spite of the fact that the *Tribune* had become a stock company, it was always known as Greeley's *Tribune*, even after he had, for one reason or another, lost his control of the stock. His dominating influence and his directing hand made the paper. His name at the masthead gave the *Tribune* its prestige. And the *Tribune* made Greeley. It was not what the *Tribune* said, but what *Horace Greeley* said, and we hope later on to analyze and explain the unprecedented

power wielded by this rising editor who in 1850 was not yet forty years old. Greeley had not reached the peak of his fame, but he was considerably past the half-way mark of his life. Let us look at his works, isms, and prospects.

Before he became editor of the *Tribune* he was impressed with Fourierism and the Brook Farm, but was never an active participant. The famous Brook Farm was not a part of Fourierism in the beginning, but when Albert Brisbane, father of Arthur, came back from Europe, he induced Greeley to open the columns of the *Tribune* to a department intended to promote the idea, which involved much the same sort of communism as that of the Economites of Pennsylvania, the Shakers, or the Zoarites. Greeley became an active supporter of the idea, and the treasurer of a so-called Community located in Pike County, Pennsylvania; and it was at this time, 1845, that Brook Farm became a Fourier phalanx. Dana was a Brook Farmer and thus met Greeley, who, however, never lived on the farm. Dana urged Brisbane to get him a *Tribune* job under the friendly Greeley, but the latter objected, saying that the Brook Farm people were all lazy. However, he hired Dana at five dollars a week, and in six months he was Greeley's managing editor. The Fourier movement fizzled out, and Greeley was the recipient of an unlimited amount of ridicule from the other newspapers. However, he did not really give up his faith in the theory of the attempt to remake society, and in his *Recollections* he said: "A serious obstacle to the success of any socialistic experiment must always be confronted. I allude to the kind of persons who are usually attracted to it." Then he spoke of the conceited, the crotchety, the selfish, the headstrong, the pugnacious, the unappreciated, the played-out, the idle, and the good-for-nothing, who easily conclude that they are exactly fit for the world as it ought to be. Later in his *Recollections* he seems to come to the opinion that successful socialism must have a religious bond of some kind.

Mr. Seitz in his biography points out that Greeley had two obsessions, politics and economics, that his deep sympathy was stirred by the suffering that followed the panic of 1837, leading him to advocacy of anything tending to the amelioration of poverty. And, furthermore, Greeley proceeded on the theory that any scheme or vagary deserved a trial.

This same spirit involved him ever so slightly in spiritualism, to the glee of his critics. He was never a spiritualist, but as usual believed every ism was worthy of investigation. His wife, who became interested after the death of her little son, fell easy prey to mediums, such as the Fox sisters, but Greeley soon became suspicious of all of them. Through his wife, again, he was taunted with being a Grahamite, one of a group of persons who believed that the eating of dark bread, and abstinence from meat and condiments, would be the cure-all for disease. Greeley took a friendly attitude toward Frances Wright, an Englishwoman of advanced social ideas who later took up the so-called free love doctrine. This was another opening for the jibes of Greeley's editorial rivals. During the campaign of '72 his name was associated with the famous, not to say notorious, Claflin sisters, who were sometimes spoken of as free lovers. Mr. Seitz tells us that if Greeley had lived two years longer he would have been dragged into the Beecher-Tilton scandal because of his intimacy with both the principals. Indeed, his name was mentioned in the trial. Greeley was a frank advocate of woman's rights, and of reforms in labor and agricultural conditions when such reforms were looked upon as isms that would appeal only to the fanatical.

So far we have not heard much of Greeley on the slavery question, but his day was slowly coming. As editor of the *New Yorker* when he was taking his fling at so many evils in society, there is no indication of any strong conviction on the subject of Negro servitude. He spoke in 1837 against the murder of Lovejoy, not so much as to the question of abolition, but as to Lovejoy's right to stand against what seemed to be public opinion. He said in the *New Yorker:* "If resisting what is called public opinion is a crime, Socrates was an anarchist and Jesus Christ a felon." He called on the South to disavow the outrage and predicted that unless counteracted, "the tragedy would give a fearful impetus to the cause of abolition." Even then he hoped that the spirit of compromise and the desire for peace would rule, just as he expressed himself during the Civil War. Later when Congress was thrown into a turmoil over a bill to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, Greeley could not forbear saying: "We learn that the event we have so long anticipated—a disruption of the ties which bind us together as a nation,

through the influence of the abolition question—seems on the brink of occurrence."

Greeley's arguments against slavery were based almost entirely on economic grounds. He gave no support to the Liberty party, which had a candidate for president in 1840, nor did he approve the non-resistance policy of Garrison and Phillips, who were alleged to be secessionists because in the Boston Liberty party convention of 1844 they voted against union with slave-holders. Greeley attributed the defeat of Clay by Polk to the fact that the abolition vote had gone to Birney and not to Clay, but later he recanted by saying that Clay himself was to blame because he had "deranged our order of battle." Greeley, however, was so strong for Clay that he clung to him even though he was always for slavery. The editor took no position in favor of the Wilmot Proviso, in fact the major parties were just as unwilling to tackle the slavery question as they are today to declare themselves on prohibition, with the result that things became badly tangled.

The Whig victory in 1848 was as fruitless as Harrison's in '40. President Taylor, a staunch Southerner, was against the extension of slavery, but Clay had returned to the Senate, and was planning his compromise measure. As the old parties were each divided on slavery, Greeley began at last to admit the question was more than economic. In 1850 he said editorially: "Let the Union be a thousand times severed rather than we should aid you (the South) to plant slavery on free soil."

Taylor died a year and a half after his inauguration. Fillmore, his successor, signed the Missouri Compromise Bill and the Fugitive Slave Law, leading many good patriots to hope that the troublesome issue had been settled.

Greeley had little to say since the compromise was strong with the country. Seward, now in the Senate, and a leading force in the Whig party, was opposed to Fillmore with whom he had no influence, and presumably his partners, Weed and Greeley, stood with him. Fillmore was turned down in '52 for renomination, the plum going to Scott, the commander of the army and, like Taylor, a hero of the war with Mexico, clearly a political nonentity who could be controlled by Seward, *et al.* The Democrats easily elected Pierce in 1852, and again the peace lovers hoped for peace. Now the Fugi-

tive Slave Law became the black beast. Senator Douglas, of Illinois, a strong Democratic leader, brought about the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska Law, which gave a sort of local option on slavery to the voters of these baby states. Into this fight, says Mr. Seitz, for free constitutions Greeley threw himself with fervor, and from it dates his real adoption of the cause of freedom as against that of bondage, according to one historian. His pen spurted fire, and he became the target for hostile opinion in the South.

Greeley had at last made the grade, although even yet he would not have declared that the Union *must* be preserved. He supported with might and main the free-soil parties, even the Kansas squatters sent from New England, contributing money to buy rifles for them, rifles shipped in shoe boxes as Beecher's Bibles. Yet he was pessimistic about the success of his friends, was still for compromise, and warned Dana not to let the *Tribune* become too rabid.

Enters now John Brown, whose abolition zeal carried him to Kansas and back to Harper's Ferry. Greeley's support of the fierce old fanatic brought upon his head the wrath of the then Democratic *Harper's Weekly*, which intimated, according to one writer, that there was no use in hanging Brown if Greeley and others escaped. Many believed, probably mistakenly, that Greeley had backed Brown in the Harper's Ferry raid, but in October, 1859, Greeley wrote of the tragedy: "It was the work of madness, but John Brown had so often looked death in the face that what seemed madness to others doubtless wore a different aspect to him." In a letter he predicted that the raid had hastened the "irrepressible conflict," Seward's phrase, and that the end of slavery in Virginia and the Union was ten years nearer than it seemed a few weeks earlier. Greeley was a seer with one eye closed, for the conflict and emancipation were only two or three years off. If Greeley was tardy in reaching his decision he had plenty of good company, even Abraham Lincoln. "Lincoln," says one writer, "became the candidate of the Republican party, which earned the fame of freeing the slaves, without the slightest intention of doing so at the start. The force that did it was the one headed by Horace Greeley, who so irritated the South that it threw itself upon the sword. The North, per se, would never have done anything."

Even up to the time of the formation of the Republican party Greeley's evolution was slow, but perhaps no slower than that of other leaders of the era. Yet, in the light of his later prominence, and the pedestal upon which he was placed by the hero worshipers, we can but feel a little vexed that he was not "evoluted" faster. He was not in principle an abolitionist, he was not a thick-and-thin Unionist, he was not for making slavery a party issue. Certainly the tottering Whig party, with the shade of Henry Clay still hovering over it, could not take up such an issue. Although willing to give money and pen support to John Brown, he gave solely for the purpose of opposing the extension of slavery. We can find little or nothing to indicate any deep-seated antagonism to slavery as an institution, or any vigorous adherence to the idea that a state could be coerced to remaining in the Union.

Having come thus far with Greeley we can with difficulty recall the blond-haired, awkward youth who two decades before had made his debut as the editor of the *New Yorker*, a youth of fads and fancies and whims, and perhaps not many fixed ideals, and surely without vision of the exciting drama to come in which he would occupy so much of the stage. The mystery of Greeley is still unexplained.

Before the sixties Greeley had become a persistent office seeker. In 1848 he was elected as a Whig to fill out a three-months vacancy in Congress, distinguishing himself as much by his work as correspondent for the *Tribune* as by his record on the floor of the House. In both capacities he ran true to form. His criticism of men and measures was full of vim and vinegar, although with an eye upon his line of communications; his letters to Managing Editor Dana complaining of the way the latter was handling things in the *Tribune* office are almost amusing.

Greeley's chief activity in Congress was his attack on the grafting of Congressmen in connection with the mileage allowed them in traveling to and from Washington. He estimated that members collected nearly $200,000 more than they should by charging the Government for roundabout routes to the capital. His bill to regulate this mileage was defeated, but his crusade did some good. He failed in needed reforms in the navy, such as abolishing flogging and the issuing of grog rations, and tried to change the practice of giving

public lands to other than actual settlers. An obscure member of the same Congress was one Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. Greeley was not renominated.

His ambition for office showed itself next in 1854, when the Whig party was giving way to the Republican. He suggested to Weed that he (Greeley) should have the nomination for governor, and when Weed could not see the advisability of this, Greeley asked for second place, a doubtful honor that was given to his bitter journalistic rival, Raymond of the *Times*. A few days after the November election Greeley dissolved the political firm of Seward, Weed, and Greeley in a letter to Seward in which he recounted how his editorial services had been sought by Weed in 1837 and later. He declared that he founded the *Tribune* at the suggestion of Weed and Seward on the promise of financial assistance which he never received. He lamented that during this period when offices were being distributed, he was never thought of, except to be given the nomination for state printer when the party was hopelessly out of power. Later when there was a chance for success, that same office went to Weed himself. He characterized the selection of Raymond for the lieutenant governorship as bitterly humiliating. The famous letter concludes in a friendly enough spirit, admitting that Seward had done him many acts of kindness, and trusting that he, Greeley, would never be found in opposition to Seward. But it was not to be, for Greeley's support of Lincoln at the Republican convention in 1860 brought defeat to Seward, although Greeley always insisted that he had no thought of revenge.

To continue here the record of Greeley as an office seeker. He wanted to go to the Republican national convention of 1860 as a delegate, but when no New York district would send him, he managed to get in from Oregon. In 1861 he sought the United States senatorship made vacant by the selecting of Seward for the Lincoln cabinet, his chief opponent being William M. Evarts, the choice of Seward and Weed. Greeley's part in the defeat of Seward for the presidency rankled, and vengeance was sweet. A compromise candidate, Ira H. Harris, more or less unknown, was chosen.

In his autobiography Chauncey Depew tells how Greeley sought the Republican nomination for the governorship of New York in 1868. He says Greeley coerced him (Depew) into placing Greeley

in nomination because of Depew's political obligations to Greeley and the *Tribune*. Depew's speech almost did the trick, throwing the opposition into a panic. Greeley's nomination was only prevented by recessing overnight.

Greeley was a member of the State Constitutional Convention of 1867; in the year following he was an unsuccessful candidate for Congress; in 1869 he took the nomination for State Comptroller after three other men had declined it. He was defeated as usual. In 1870 he ran for Congress again, this time against Sunset Cox, once of Ohio, then of New York, with the same result. Then came the debacle of 1872. He was offered the postmaster generalship by President Lincoln, and when this was referred to some years later, the *Tribune* declared: "There was no moment of Mr. Lincoln's rule when any place in his gift would have been accepted by Mr. Greeley." So much for the office-seeking Greeley.

Greeley had a large part in the formation of the Republican party. The Whigs, never standing on a solid foundation, were gradually fading from the picture, although it has been said that Greeley was long unaware of the fact, again showing his lack of political acumen. General Scott had led the Whigs to defeat in the presidential campaign of 1852, going down before Franklin Pierce. Two years later came the struggle over the Kansas-Nebraska legislation, which Greeley opposed, as did many other Whigs, who began to consider a new party. The idea crystallized in Ripon, Wisconsin, and when the Westerners approached Greeley for assistance, he was not at first particularly encouraging. In a letter Greeley expressed curiously his idea of the power of the press by saying: "We will try and do what we can. But remember that editors can only follow where the people's heart is already prepared to go with them. They can direct and animate a healthy public indignation, but cannot create a soul beneath the ribs of death." For most of his public life Greeley was engaged in attempting to mould public opinion, but possibly in this moment of depression he told the truth about the power of the press.

After the enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska legislation, the *Tribune* said: "The revolution is accomplished, and slavery is king. How long shall this monarch reign? This is now the question for

the Northern people to answer. Conspiracy has done its worst. Treason has done its worst. Who comes to the rescue?"

Greeley had declared that Douglas and Pierce, by advocating this measure, had made more abolitionists in three months than Garrison and Phillips had made in fifty years. Greeley and the *Tribune* now entered whole-heartedly into the task of uniting Northern sentiment. Says Linn in his history of Greeley: "Whigs like Greeley and Seward, Free-Soilers like Sumner and Chase, Abolitionists like Owen Lovejoy and Giddings, and Democrats like Trumbull and Blair, saw a common ground on which they could fight under the same banner; and on this ground the foundation of the new Republican party was laid in 1854."

The name "Republican" was urged by a Wisconsin lawyer named Bovay, but to Greeley goes the credit for the public christening. Greeley's enthusiasm for the new party increased, and the influence of the *Tribune* became even greater. The ground, however, was fallow, and public opinion was stirring, so that Greeley's task was much easier than it would have been two or three years earlier. He was assaulted in Washington by a Democratic member of Congress who resented something the *Tribune* had printed; and the paper was indicted in Virginia for opinions tending to incite resistance to slavery. Things were warming up.

The new party brought the several factions together in a New York State Convention of 1854, and a ticket was put up, on which Greeley vainly sought the governorship, and even the second place. In that year the Democrats lost their majority in the national House, most of the anti-Democratic members taking the name Republican. It was in this Congress that Lewis D. Campbell, uncle of our own Governor, was a Democratic candidate for the speakership, which, after a long deadlock, went to Nathaniel P. Banks. Of this Greeley wrote: "It was memorable as the very first instance in our national history when Northern resistance to slavery won in a fair, stand-up contest without compromise or equivocation."

Greeley was not only sending the *Tribune* hot political news and editorials from Washington, but he was doing much complaining of the way his subordinates were running the *Tribune*. In one letter he said he was heartsick. "I would stay here forever," he added, "and work like a slave if I could get my letters printed as I send them,

but the *Tribune* is doomed to be a second-rate paper, and I am tired." A little later he wrote to Dana: "As to salary I am indifferent, and as to the *Tribune*, discouraged. The infernal picayune spirit in which it is published has broken my heart."

The first Republican national convention was held in Pittsburgh on Washington's birthday in 1856, with delegates not only from the so-called free states, but from Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and even from Virginia and South Carolina. As Greeley wrote dispatches for his paper, he seemed to gain inspiration, enthusiasm, and hope, even attempting a little prophecy by saying of the new party: "Its moral and political effect upon the country will be felt for the next quarter of a century." Another one-eyed piece of foresight. His smallness was shown in a letter to Dana regarding an address by his newspaper competitor, Raymond: "Have we got to surrender a page of the next weekly to Raymond's bore of an address? The man who could inflict six columns on a long-suffering public, on such an occasion, cannot possibly know enough to write an address." And yet Greeley on the platform could deliver lectures quite as long. His peace-loving character was shown during the convention by his appeal for kindly treatment of the slave-owning states.

The Pittsburgh convention was merely a preliminary, as nominations were postponed to a Philadelphia June meeting, attended by over five hundred delegates, including some Democrats. In the delegation were James G. Blaine, Gideon Welles, David Wilmot of "proviso" fame, and John Palmer, destined to be the "gold Democrat" candidate for President against William J. Bryan.

General Frémont was chosen, and Abraham Lincoln received 110 votes for the second place. Although the nominee was defeated by Buchanan, the big vote polled was alarming to the conservatives both North and South. The *Tribune* supported Frémont, and Greeley stumped for him, but neither was hopeful of the immediate success of the infant party. In announcing defeat the *Tribune* said: "We have lost a battle. The Bunker Hill of the new struggle for freedom is past; the Saratoga and Yorktown are yet to be achieved."

Events marched rapidly. Two days after Buchanan's inauguration came the Dred Scott decision, allowing slaveholders to take their chattels into the territories; the Lecompton contest, the Lincoln-Douglas debate, and John Brown's raid followed. Greeley said

the Scott decision "was entitled to just as much moral weight as would be the judgment of a majority of those congregated in any Washington barroom." Speaking of the John Brown tragedy he said: "Let their epitaphs remain unwritten until the not distant day when no slave shall clank his chains in the shades of Monticello or by the groves of Mt. Vernon."

The approach of another presidential year found the leaders of both parties nervous and poorly prepared for the show-down that was inevitable. Buchanan was not given a renomination, one faction of the Democrats choosing Douglas, the other Breckinridge. In the Republican convention a bitter fight was brewing with the spirit of revenge hovering over all. Seward, managed by Weed, was the logical candidate, but he had to reckon with his Greeley, the old time junior member of the firm. Greeley hit upon Edward Bates, a slaveholder of Missouri, as the man to beat Seward, and in this he had the backing of the Blairs of that state. Greeley still considered himself a conservative — he was not against slavery, merely against its extension. We cannot know how sincere Greeley was in his adherence to Bates, although his enemies had no doubts in the matter. They averred that revenge on Seward and Weed was his motive. Anyhow Greeley opposed Seward most effectively, and, after the first ballot, advised the Bates delegates to swing over to Lincoln. On the third ballot the landslide came, after which the nomination was made unanimous, a bitter dose for the old guard who had been sure Seward would win. In a signed article in the *Times*, Raymond made reference to the 1854 letter of Greeley to Seward, then unpublished; Greeley challenged Seward to give out the letter, and when Seward gave it to the press, Weed expressed regret in a kind of Uriah Heep manner. Greeley continued to insist there was nothing personal in his opposition to Seward, saying: "I like Mr. Seward personally, but I love the party and its principles more."

Lincoln had 180 electoral votes, Douglas 12, and Bell 39, Breckinridge 72. Lincoln, let it be remembered, was a minority president on the popular vote.

The next move in the Greeley-Seward feud came speedily. In 1861, the editor was beaten for the United States senatorship to which his services undoubtedly entitled him, though he belittled himself by begging for it, thus evidencing that he was unfitted for po-

litical responsibilities. But he was no less unfit than some of our present senators.

Before going into the Civil War period, let us pause again to take stock of Greeley. He is still manifesting the same weaknesses—the itch for office, the failure to read the future, the tendency to discouragement, the inability or indisposition to make friends, and an intense individualism. Let us think of these as his liabilities. What were his assets? First, his courage and sincerity; his ability to inspire confidence in himself among his hundreds of thousands of readers in spite of his inconsistencies; his clean-cut, easily understood writing; his enormous fund of information in matters political and governmental; his striking personality wherever he appeared; and — the largest asset of all — his fortune in living when he did, for big times make big men, or at least give them the opportunity to do big things.

It is bad for Greeley's fame that so many editorials and letters rise up to smite him. For instance, in 1858 for a time he favored the acceptance of Douglas as the Republican candidate for the Senate. He considered Douglas much stronger than Lincoln, and hoped the Little Giant might be brought over to the Republican party. In another letter he expressed entire lack of faith in the anti-slavery men of the country.

To go back for a moment to the activity of Greeley before and during the Chicago convention, one student of Greeley has declared that his best job was done unwittingly. For spite against Seward he brought about the nomination of Lincoln, and then like an old woman ragged Lincoln all through the war. The best things of Greeley's life were done between 1848 and 1860 in the editorial columns of the *Tribune* with its weekly edition ($1.00 a year) which contained his leading editorials of the week, together with a lot of agricultural miscellany which interested the farmers. This weekly had an immense circulation through the Middle West and an overwhelming influence not only in its direct circle, but also with the local newspaper men who got their inspiration from it. It was their political Bible, and although Greeley had his vagaries, on the whole it, the *Tribune*, was on the "side of the angels."

Here's a story of the time, which I cannot vouch for, but it may very well be true: In 1860 the Republican national committee sent

out the usual call to the states for the election of delegates in proportion to the number of Congressmen respectively, among others, of course, Virginia. The secession element was by that time in control of nine-tenths of the state, and black Republicans were scarce. But a few unterrified men in the Panhandle and about Fairmont got together and elected *bona fide* delegates from one or two Congressional districts. The state was entitled to thirty odd delegates, but here comes the joker, each delegation was entitled to fill vacancies in its own ranks. The delegation had brought with them some neighbors and friends, local editors and others, but they had just about enough to fill out the delegation. Most of them were from Wheeling, as a matter of fact, but they had almost as much voting strength as Illinois itself and they were a strong factor in the convention. They were all for Lincoln. Why? They did not know Lincoln particularly, but they had been nurtured politically by the good old *Weekly Tribune*. They looked upon Greeley as their mentor. He said Lincoln, and they so voted. This incident was no doubt paralleled in other states. The scattering vote from the sticks controlled by Greeley overwhelmed Seward.

While we are maintaining that Greeley's best work was done before the Civil War, it may be well to elucidate this view. Mr. Linn, who was one of Greeley's *Tribune* staff, sets down in his life of Greeley the source of the *Tribune's* power:

1. No matter how strong the Greeley personality, the *Tribune* would not have succeeded if it had not been a *good newspaper*, better than its rivals, not only in its editorial, but in its news columns. As a reporter of the interpretative type Greeley was far superior to anyone else. His letters from Europe and his correspondence while on trips across this country were avidly read. All the time he was keeping a bulldog watch over the conduct of his paper, no matter where he was; and it must not be forgotten that he had the ability to gather around him a remarkable staff of writers and editors, not the least of whom was Charles A. Dana, who was with the *Tribune* from 1847 to 1862. The scent for news was as strong as it is now, and the difficulties of obtaining it much greater.

2. Greeley's devotion to "isms" did as much as anything else to advertise the *Tribune*, although we can scarcely accuse Greeley of being a commercial hypocrite in the conduct of the *Tribune*. It was

Carlyle who said something about the "isms of all *true* men in all *true* centuries." Greeley's generation was ripe for economic and social experiments and Greeley was not a man to be muzzled even by motives of expediency. He wrote to Weed, who had taken him to task: "Do not ask me to forget that I, too, am a man; that I must breathe free air or be stifled."

3. The fact that Greeley had a real interest in agriculture, although he was far from being a dirt farmer, won a large clientage to the *Tribune,* much space being devoted to farming interests. His series of essays entitled "What I Know About Farming" attracted favorable attention, even if jeered at by his journalistic and political enemies.

4. Greeley's lectures served to advertise his paper. Greeley loved to talk, and the lecture field was tempting to him. No subject was too much for him. In a lecture on "Literature as a Vocation," he called Shakespeare "the highest type of literary hack," finding in his writings a combination of "starry flights and paltry jokes, celestial penetration and contemptible puns."

5. Greeley's short membership of Congress brought advertising to the *Tribune* for much of which his unwise enemies may be thanked.

To these reasons for the *Tribune's* power may well be added Greeley's everlasting and intelligent interest in politics. His participation in party management with Seward and Weed, his attendance on conventions both as delegate and reporter, his part in the formation of the Whig party, his outstanding work at Chicago in bringing about the nomination of Lincoln — all these things made for the continued influence of the editor and his *Tribune.*

We are now at the threshold of Civil War. Close upon the election of Lincoln rumblings were heard, but a Greeley editorial showed that he took them not at all seriously. He expressed sympathy for the defeated, and told them in effect that they might have better luck next time. He advised the South that disunion would be a bad remedy, but "if the Cotton States shall decide that they can do better outside the Union than in it, we insist on letting them go in peace. The right to secede may be a revolutionary one, but it exists nevertheless. We hope never to live in a republic where one section is pinned to the other by bayonets."

This utterance, if considered in connection with the general Northern sentiment of 1860, is not so startling, chiefly showing the editor's lack of vision. The North, says one writer, seemed unable to sense the situation, even when state after state arrayed itself with the new confederacy. Government forts and property were seized, but no real alarm was felt. "There mainly prevailed a stupefying sense of getting rid of bad rubbish." Greeley participated in a futile peace conference in Washington when he like others was for letting the slave states go, as the easiest way. That there might be civil war never seemed to occur to him. Even as late as December, 1860, the *Tribune* reiterated its position that if six or eight states declared their intention to secede, no Congress would coerce them into remaining in the Union. A week or so later, Greeley modified this by intimating that if the seceders took up arms the situation would be different, although he goes on to say, "It is not treason for the states to hate the Union and seek its disruption."

These declarations of Greeley reflected to a considerable degree the sentiment of the North, for it must be kept clear that in all crises public opinion is divided, to be unified only by vigorous propaganda. For example, the United States and the World War. Much criticism has been written of President Buchanan's wobbling conduct, undoubtedly caused or at least upheld by the attitude of Greeley's *Tribune*. The quotation by the way, often attributed to Greeley, "Wayward sisters, let them go in peace," was not his at all, but General Scott's, who had little relish for leading the Northern forces against the South. Although Greeley did not coin the phrase, we know that it expressed his sentiments.

After the war Greeley wrote that he had long held to the idea that the North could get along without the South and that he had become weary of the cringing and compromising of the North to preserve the Union. He added, "My own controlling conviction from first to last, was—there must at all events be no concession to slavery. Disunion, should it befall, may be a calamity, but complicity in slavery extension is guilt in which the Republicans must in no case concur."

Dr. Lyman Abbott in his *Reminiscences* records that every community contained those who regretted they had voted for Lincoln because he brought on the war. Compare this with the expressions

of people who felt after President Wilson's second election that they had been hoodwinked by the campaign slogan, "He kept us out of war."

Greeley told of a visit he made to Lincoln before the inauguration when the President-elect "clung to the delusion that forbearance, persuasion, and soft words would yet obviate all necessity for deadly strife." Greeley thought Lincoln never really waked up until the tragedy of Bull Run, and other writers have testified to the slowness of Lincoln to realize the situation. When the game got past the bluffing stage, Greeley rebuked the president for his dilatoriness, which moved William Cullen Bryant, the poet editor of the *New York Post*, to write to Lincoln to pay no attention to Greeley's vagaries. The apologists for Lincoln adduce the fact that he was after all a minority president; that he was not elected to coerce the South; that several of the large Northern states, notably New York and Pennsylvania, were Democratic; that he did not have a united North at his back. There would have been a different story to tell if the Southern states had proceeded peaceably and in a parliamentary way to disunion, but they did not; they fired on Fort Sumter, and the deluge followed. That act did more to unify the North than all the speeches and editorials in the world could have done.

Three days after the fall of Sumter, the *Tribune* rejoiced that there was to be no thought of bribing or coaxing the traitors who had dared to aim their cannon balls at the flag of the Union, the editorial closing with this short paragraph: "Fort Sumter is temporarily lost, but the country is saved. Long live the Republic." These words were more prophetic than Greeley was wont to utter, and henceforth he excelled Lincoln and most of the North in his zeal to put down the rebellion.

A writer has pointed out that then as now New Yorkers regarded themselves as pretty much the whole country, as they did in the World War. An influential number of citizens opposed coercion of the Southern States because of the resultant loss of business. Indeed, Mayor Wood in a message proposed that in the event of disunion New York should declare itself a free city. The New York press persisted in trying to run the war, even if it was sharply divided into what Bennett called the niggerhead press and the copperhead press. It was Bennett who characterized three of the union papers, the

World, the *Times* and the *Post*, as the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

At that time the *Tribune* did not do much but wring its hands. In fact, a month after Lincoln's inauguration Greeley was attacking the President for indecision and inactivity, more to nag him than because the editor had any well-defined policy before the attack on Sumter.

Another example of Greeley's wobbling was shown by an editorial in January, 1861, saying, "I deny to one state, or to a dozen different states, the right to dissolve this Union. It can only be legally dissolved as it was formed—by the free consent of all the parties concerned," contradicting his previous declaration in favor of letting the dissatisfied go. This inconsistency was eagerly seized upon by the Southern leaders, so much so that Lincoln wrote to Greeley gently cautioning him against such utterances.

Lincoln's troubles began at once. The North was not united; it had no army, no generals of distinction, and a worse than useless Secretary of War. The Bull Run disaster was appalling to the North and particularly to Greeley because the *Tribune* had been clamoring for military action. In the absence of Greeley, Dana had printed for a week on the editorial page:

THE NATION'S WAR CRY

"Forward to Richmond! Forward to Richmond! The Rebel Congress must not be allowed to meet there on the 20th of July. By that date the place must be held by the National Army."

Thus goaded the advance began, only to meet the disastrous defeat of Bull Run. Greeley came out in a long statement that the "Forward to Richmond" slogan was not his, but he assumed all responsibility. He "never commended or imagined any such strategy as the launching of barely thirty of the one hundred thousand volunteers within fifty miles of Washington, against ninety thousand rebels, enveloped in a labyrinth of strong entrenchments, and unreconnoitered masked batteries."

The result of Bull Run to Greeley was a violent brain fever. After his recovery he wrote to Lincoln a letter full of discouragement, suggesting an armistice with a view to a peaceful ending of the dispute between the States, if the rebellion, in Lincoln's opinion,

could not be put down. Greeley's friends explained that he was on the verge of insanity when he wrote the letter, but so it was all through the "war of the States" as it is still called in the South—Greeley was always nagging the administration. Mr. Seitz says: "To presidents and politicians the aggressive editor is much of a nuisance. Greeley, with his prying, persistent prescience [I don't get this prescience myself] was more, he was a pest. His keen insight, his strength of purpose, his unwillingness to temporize, all combined to make him an undesirable with the shapers of policies and the executors of plans."

Without a good newspaper like the *Tribune* Greeley would not have been the influence he was. As a politician, or a lecturer, or an essayist, or a writer of books, he would by comparison have been negligible; but when the opportunity was his through a widely read newspaper to exercise his undoubted talent as a writer, and make use of his almost unequaled knowledge of public men and affairs, to pound away every day, he was indeed a "pest" to his adversaries, and a leader to those who were waiting to be led.

When considering Lincoln's part in the Civil War we must frequently raise the question as to what would have happened had Greeley turned his influence to the unreserved support of the President. Knowing Greeley as we do, we see that he could not have done differently. To paraphrase Lincoln, men can only "do the right as God gives them to see the right." Lincoln's insight was greater than Greeley's. A country is blessed when in a great crisis the leader happens to be the man of greatest insight. Furthermore, Greeley's part in the tragi-comedy of 1872 was equally inevitable. We must listen to the Greek chorus, "Fate leads us on," whether we will or not. However, to suppose the impossible, had Greeley supported Lincoln, I am inclined to think that the struggle could have been but little shortened. As the war went on Greeley's influence became relatively smaller and smaller, and Lincoln's increased greatly as the country came to know him.

We can touch only briefly on later events because it seems more interesting and more significant here to trace the early development of Greeley's character. For the last decade of his life he was simply running true to form. He was never an abolitionist, and he urged only as a war measure the Emancipation Proclamation in his

famous article, "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," an open letter to Lincoln published in the *Tribune* August 19, 1862. In it Greeley declared it was preposterous to think of putting down the rebellion, and at the same time upholding its inciting cause, slavery. "The rebellion," he said, "if crushed out tomorrow would be renewed in a year if slavery were left in full vigor." The letter's last paragraph commenced: "I close, as I began, with the statement that what an immense majority of the loyal millions of your countrymen require of you is a frank, declared, unqualified execution of the laws of the land, more especially of the Confiscation Act." And in conclusion: "I entreat you to render a hearty and unequivocal obedience to the law of the land." The whole tenor of the letter is that emancipation would help to win the war, for the freed Negroes would work as scouts, guides, spies, cooks, teamsters, diggers, or choppers, even if not actually allowed to fight. Lincoln, too, stressed this when the Proclamation was issued.

The President wanted a Northern victory to precede the Proclamation and Greeley's letter could not hurry him. His telegraphed reply to the Prayer three days later was one of Lincoln's masterpieces. In it he declared: "My paramount object is to save the Union, and not to save or destroy slavery." He followed with the well-known words as to his willingness to save it by freeing part of the slaves or all of them if he could thus accomplish his primary purpose. It is clear that Lincoln at this stage acted from motives of military and political necessity. His next act removed McClellan as head of the Army, perhaps a bit of politics, for if "Little Mac" had won a marked military success, he might have been elected President in 1864, probably with the support of Greeley.

The draft riots in New York in the summer of 1863 brought danger to Greeley from the mob. Police protected the *Tribune* office, but the editor was not in the least perturbed by threats against him and his newspaper, saying: "It doesn't make much difference. I've done my work. I might as well be killed by this mob as to die in bed." What a glorious martyr he would have made!

After pestering Lincoln for emancipation, Greeley's next move was to urge negotiations for peace, showing again his lack of faith in the ultimate success of the Union. As both England and France were friendly to the South, Greeley appealed to the French

minister at Washington to get France to intervene. One contemporary writes that Greeley boasted to him in 1863 that he would drive Lincoln into ending the war by mediation if in no other way. It is said that the trustees of the *Tribune* had to interfere to stop the editor's peace talk. And here it should be told that Greeley had lost financial control of the *Tribune*, now a stock company, generously permitted by Greeley, partly to obtain additional capital, but chiefly to allow some of the *Tribune* employees to own stock.

In the summer of 1864 Greeley was informed that two Confederate plenipotentiary commissioners were in Canada ready to enter into peace negotiations. Greeley wrote to the President advising him to treat with the Southerners. Lincoln had no faith in the negotiation, but in a kindly spirit told Greeley to go ahead, and if he could find anyone with a written proposition from Jefferson Davis asking for peace, including the restoration of the Union, and the abandonment of slavery, to bring that person to him in Washington. Greeley went to Niagara where he found that the commissioners had no credentials, although they claimed they could get them, which meant that the North would be in the position of making overtures for peace. Followed statements by the President and editorials in the *Tribune*, in which Greeley took sides against the President. He declined two invitations to talk over the matter with Lincoln, writing: "I know that nine-tenths of the whole American people, North and South, are anxious for peace—peace on almost any terms—and utterly sick of human slaughter and devastation." He again demanded an armistice. It becomes increasingly difficult to make a hero of Greeley.

Here we note a fundamental difference between Lincoln and Greeley. Greeley shrank when the crisis was at hand, while Lincoln steadily gained in stature. In Greeley's lecture on Lincoln in 1868 he said: "Never before did one so constantly and visibly grow under the discipline of incessant cares, anxieties, and trials. Had he lived twenty years longer I believe he would have steadily increased in ability to counsel his countrymen, and in the estimation of the wise and good."

Union victories brought renewed hope to the North, and aided tremendously in the re-election of Lincoln and the defeat of McClellan. Just how much these successes did for Lincoln is under-

stood when we recall the heat of the presidential campaign of 1864. Lincoln had to placate Chase and Frémont by rather desperate political dealing, at the same time meeting the continued opposition of Greeley. The President went so far as to invite himself to Greeley's office for a conference, but Greeley ignored this and a go-between visited both men, the outcome of which, it is said, was an offer of the postmaster generalship to the editor. Whether this alleged offer moved Greeley or not, it is a fact that in September, 1864, Greeley published in the *Tribune* a two-column editorial: "Henceforth," he said, "we fly the banner of Abraham Lincoln for the next president. Mr. Lincoln has done seven-eighths of the work after his fashion; there must be vigor and virtue enough left in him to do the other fraction. The work is in his hands. We must re-elect him, and, God helping us, we will." After the assassination Greeley wrote: "There are those who say that Mr. Lincoln was fortunate in his death as in his life; I judge otherwise. I hold him most inept for the leadership of a people involved in a desperate, agonizing war; while I deem few men better fitted to guide a nation's destinies in time of peace. His true career was just opening when an assassin's bullet quenched his light of life."

Greeley's courage and his predilection for doing the unpopular thing were shown in his signing, with a dozen others, the bail bond of Davis in 1867. Mr. Seitz says of this act: "An appalling storm broke about the head of Horace Greeley. Friends of a lifetime turned against him, and he was execrated all over the nation. Thousands of subscribers to the second volume of *The American Conflict* canceled their contracts, and the consequences to the *Tribune* were colossal. The Weekly was refused at post offices by the carload. It had a circulation around two hundred and fifty thousand; about two hundred thousand of this was lost." The Union League Club of New York cited Greeley to appear to defend himself, but instead of doing so he replied in two columns of the *Tribune*, and we are told that the Union Leaguers curled up under the blast. Greeley's name was substituted for Davis' in the sour apple tree song, and although the excitement soon died out, neither Greeley nor the *Tribune* came back.

The *Tribune* was, of course, active in the reconstruction days advocating general amnesty and general suffrage. Its editor was

in the saddle against Andrew Johnson, largely, it was said by Greeley's enemies, because Johnson retained Seward in his cabinet. The old feud was never forgotten. Who shall say that Seward and Weed did not wish many times that they had made Greeley governor in 1854, or United States Senator in 1861? Had Seward been elected president, who knows what would have happened? And then again, probably no Republican but Lincoln could have been successful. No end to speculation here. Andrew Johnson would not have been in the White House; anything might have happened to Greeley as either governor of New York or United States Senator; the war of the States might have been indefinitely postponed. Another might-have-been: Had the nomination of Greeley by Johnson as minister to Austria not been tabled in the Senate, the editor would have been pigeon-holed in Europe with consequent change in the whole course of events, journalistic and political.

Greeley was not enthusiastic over the nomination of Grant in 1868, Grant whose only vote had been cast as a Democrat, and soon after the inauguration Greeley began finding fault, premonitory of his support of an independent Republican to defeat Grant for renomination. Late in 1871 John Bigelow of the *New York Post* wrote to a friend that he feared the presidential bee was in Greeley's bonnet. Whitelaw Reid, then next in command to Greeley on the *Tribune,* was also opposed to Grant.

We now come to the last episode in the life of Greeley, the saddest of all, the least excusable, and yet inevitable. The Greek Chorus is tuning up. The mutiny in the Republican party against Grant, organized and led by a number of journalists, was initiated in Missouri by Schurz, Preetorius, and Pultizer, from whom Medill of Chicago, and Halstead of Cincinnati caught the contagion. Then it spread east to Bryant and Greeley of New York and Bowles of Springfield. But, even with the revolt growing, Grant's supporters did not believe Greeley would bolt. In fact in March, 1872, he wrote to a friend that he would despise himself if he pretended to acquiesce in Grant's re-election. "I may *have* to support him," he added, "but I would rather quit editing newspapers forever." He was referring to the fact that he did not control the *Tribune.* Just how Greeley became the leader of the disaffected Republicans is a matter of doubt. A theory is that the Nast cartoons portraying

Greeley as seeking the nomination pushed him to the front before he himself felt the urge. One writer says that "Whitelaw Reid was credited with working behind the scenes and Greeley soon became unquestionably receptive." However, when we remember Greeley's persistent itch for office, we can believe that he was not at all averse to the mention of his name.

The Labor Reform party met in Columbus in February, 1872, and nominated Judge David Davis of Illinois for president, and the Prohibition party made its national bow the same year. The Liberal Republican convention met in Cincinnati May 1, with Charles Francis Adams as the outstanding candidate, but Reid was there working like a beaver for his chief. Adams led on the first ballot with 203 votes; Greeley was second with 147, with about 300 divided among other candidates. The voting see-sawed until the sixth ballot, when Greeley received a majority, but the usual motion for unanimity failed. The selection of Greeley was a bitter pill for Reformer Carl Schurz, who wrote a letter to Greeley referring to the deals that had preceded the nomination as a successful piece of political huckstering, although he exonerated Greeley by calling him a pure and honest man.

During the campaign the statement was made that the Germans were against Greeley because he was a protectionist, to which the nominee tartly replied that the real reason was because he was a teetotaler. Greeley, the high protectionist, was soon to be indorsed by the low tariff Democrats, and as a precautionary measure the Liberal Republican party platform was silent on the tariff, Whitelaw Reid's idea prevailing that this issue should be considered by the congressional districts and not be made a matter of national policy. Eight years later when Hancock declared the tariff to be a local issue he was laughed out of court, although he was far nearer right than those who ridiculed him.

Greeley in his letter of acceptance declared: "If elected I shall be the president, not of a party, but of the whole people." Trouble began to brew at once. Schurz bolted Greeley, and with others convened in New York to nominate William S. Groesbeck of Ohio on a high tariff platform. The Democrats met at Baltimore on July 9 to carry out a cut-and-dried program by swallowing the

Liberal Republican nominee, platform, hook, line, and sinker. Grant had been renominated over a month before at Philadelphia.

Greeley was happy in his nomination and entirely confident, although his weaknesses were attacked on all sides, Nast, the cruel cartoonist, leading in *Harper's Weekly;* Dana, now editor of the *Sun,* was unsparing in lambasting his old chief; Godkin, of the *Nation,* said that the men who were enthusiastic about Greeley did not care much about reform, and the ardent reformers could not be enthusiastic about Greeley. Neither could Henry Ward Beecher stomach his old friend.

Greeley announced his retirement as editor of the *Tribune,* his place being taken by Reid who whole-heartedly supported the Liberal Republican-Democratic ticket, whether from loyalty to his chief, or from honest adherence to the new party's purposes. Greeley tried to do what McKinley later did, conduct a front porch campaign, but when the hundreds who visited Chappaqua proved too great a strain on Greeley's family, he took the stump for six weeks until called home by the illness of his wife, whom he attended until her death, five days before election.

Senator Voorhees of Indiana said of Greeley's campaign speaking: "For elevation of thought, propriety of sentiment, for broad philanthropy, for general benevolence, and for Christian statesmanship, the speeches of Mr. Greeley have no parallel in American history."

Grant had 286 electoral votes to 66 for Greeley, who died before the electoral college met. Most of his votes went to Thomas A. Hendricks. Two days after the election the *Tribune* printed a card signed by Greeley in which he announced that he had resumed the editorship of the *Tribune.* He said: "Since he (Greeley) will never again be a candidate for any office, and is not now in full accord with either of the great parties he will be able and will endeavor to give wider and steadier regard to the progress of science, industry, and the useful arts." In the same issue was a jocular statement headed "Crumbs of Comfort" to which Greeley took violent objection. He wrote an editorial correcting it, which Reid suppressed. A contemporary writer says Greeley whined and cried like a baby, saying he was ruined! The *Tribune* was ruined! Reid was a traitor who should be turned out! Anything to save the paper!

Internal conditions at the Tribune office were most distressing.

Greeley, only 61, might have weathered through his political defeat had it not been for his worry about his newspaper, which in fact was no longer his. Samuel Sinclair, the publisher, sold his twenty shares for $200,000 to William Orton, president of the Western Union Telegraph Company, who got enough options to give him control which later passed to Jay Gould!! God save the mark!

The old office saw Greeley no more. Soon he was placed in the home of a physician, stricken with brain fever, dying on November 29. After the body lay in state in the City Hall, the funeral services were held in the Church of the Divine Paternity, Henry Ward Beecher assisting in the services, at which Clara Louise Kellogg sang. President Grant and many distinguished men followed the remains to Greenwood Cemetery. George William Curtis and other bitter opponents joined to praise the man they had so recently crucified. As often happens, death had made a hero.

Many interesting things have been crowded out of this paper. The indexes of history and biography of the period are full of references to Greeley. He figures in fiction, for example in Bacheller's *Eben Holden*. Mark Twain's *Roughing It* gives much space to him and the talkative stage driver. I have said little or nothing about the trips to Europe and to California, nor about the libel suits of James Fennimore Cooper, nor his jail sentence in France; little about his family life, which was about what might have been expected. His tacit approval of the Tweed ring was not at all to his credit as a reformer and moralist.

I am disposed to leave to you the answer to the questions raised at the beginning of this paper. What is genius? and the more specific one, Was Greeley a genius?

Let me offer briefly some observations:

1. Greeley was gifted with a precocious desire to read, as were Lincoln, Mill, Macaulay, Ruskin, Hamilton. And he was fortunate to have only good books at his hand to read, good in content, good in style, the Bible and Shakespeare, to mention only two, without access to dime novels and other trash. So before he was thirty he had an invaluable assortment of facts and ideas stored away in that remarkable memory of his, with a fair style, whatever that may mean, and he could arrange his material logically and convincingly.

2. He had courage as well as a desire to be heard. He had something to say and he was not afraid of the effect on himself. Often he spoke without sufficient consideration, when his writing showed recklessness rather than courage, but his readers always knew where he stood. He had the quality of sincerity already referred to.

3. He had variability, quite a different quality from versatility. It is hardly fair to speak of variability as a quality of genius, but it is often an accompaniment. Sometimes it is called unreliability, not quite so pretty a word. Illustrations have been given, but they may be called out again.

One day he is willing to let the Southern states secede.

The next, the *Tribune* was thundering its "Forward to Richmond" slogan.

One day he pounds Lincoln for lax prosecution of the war.

The next he favors an armistice.

One day it is anybody to beat Lincoln.

The next nobody but Lincoln will do.

One day he is for hanging Jeff Davis.

The next he goes on Davis' bail bond.

One day he says not all Democrats are horse thieves, but all horse thieves are Democrats.

The next, he is running on the Democratic ticket.

Greeley was a *man*, with all his faults! A man of fads, of idiosyncrasies, of inconsistencies, true, but withal a man of courage, of sincerity, a crusader, who aroused more antagonisms, who manifested more weaknesses, who swayed more people, who moulded more public opinion than any other editor before his time or after.

We must take his genius as it was. He can scarcely be analyzed to the advantage of his memory, or of the history of the tremendous times in which he lived.

Horace Greeley, that's all!